

FSA Board Meeting - September 2025: Agenda and Papers

Titanic Hotel, Queen's Road, Titanic Quarter, Belfast, BT3 9DT

The agenda for this meeting includes:

- Annual Local Authority Performance
- Annual FSA Science Update
- Animal Welfare Report 2024/25
- Annual Freedom of Information Requests, External Complaints and Internal Whistleblowing Report
- Report from the Director for FSA in Wales
- Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

09:00 Chair's Introduction and Chair's Report

Professor Susan Jebb presents the minutes and actions from the previous FSA Board meeting in June 2025 and presents the Chair's report.

[FSA 25/09/01- Minutes of 18 June 2025 Board Meeting](#)

[FSA 25/09/02 - Actions Arising](#)

09:20 Chief Executive's Report

Katie Pettifer presents the Chief Executive's report to the FSA Board.

[FSA 25/09/03 - Chief Executive's Report.](#)

10:00 Annual Local Authority Performance (FSA 25/09/04)

Nathan Barnhouse and Karen McCloskey present an update on local authority performance in enforcing food law for the financial year 2024/25, including statistics on the delivery of Animal Feed Official Controls, and rollout information regarding the Food Standards Delivery Model in England and Northern Ireland.

[FSA 25/09/04 - Annual Local Authority Performance](#)

10:30 Annual FSA Science Update (FSA 25/09/05)

Rick Mumford presents the Annual FSA Science Update paper providing a review of progress made, and impact delivered, over the last year and an overview of future strategic science priorities and the approach for delivering them across the next Spending Review period.

11:00 - Break

11:20 Animal Welfare Report 2024/25 (FSA 25/09/06)

Richard Wynn-Davies and Kevin Maher present the Animal Welfare Report 2024/25, covering the FSA's delivery of animal welfare controls in slaughterhouses during 2024/25.

[FSA 25/09/06 - Animal Welfare Report 2024/25](#)

11:50 Annual Freedom of Information Requests, External Complaints and Internal Whistleblowing Report (FSA 25/09/07)

Noel Sykes and Jenny Desira introduce the Annual Freedom of Information Requests, External Complaints and Internal Whistleblowing Report, which presents data and commentary on the FSA's management of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000; external complaints and internal whistleblowing; and raising a concern cases.

[FSA 25/09/07 - Annual Freedom of Information Requests, External Complaints and Internal Whistleblowing Report](#)

12:10 - Report from the Director for FSA in Wales (FSA 25/09/08)

Sian Bowsley presents the Report from the Director for FSA in Wales, giving a high-level overview of the work of the FSA in Wales over the last year and a forward look at priorities for the coming months.

[FSA 25/09/08 - Report from the Director for FSA in Wales](#)

12:25 Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) (FSA 25/09/09) and Report of the September ARAC Meeting (INFO 25/09/01)

Anthony Harbinson presents the Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), which sets out the work of ARAC in relation to the Committee's activities in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (NI) during the year to 31 March 2025.

[FSA 25/09/09 - Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee \(ARAC\)](#)

Anthony Harbinson will then present a report from the September ARAC meeting.

[INFO 25/09/01 - Report of September ARAC meeting](#)

12:35 Report from the Chair of the Business Committee (INFO 25/09/02)

The Chair of the Business Committee, Timothy Riley, presents a report from the Business Committee meeting, taking place on 10 September 2025.

[INFO 25/09/02 - Report from the Chair of the Business Committee](#)

12:45 Reports from the Chairs of the Food Advisory Committees (oral reports)

The Chairs of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC), Anthony Harbinson, and the Wales Food Advisory Committee (WFAC), Rhian Hayward, deliver oral updates from the recent meetings of the two Committees.

12:50 - Any Other Business

12:55 - Questions

13:05- End of Meeting

Questions to the FSA Board

We are keen to ensure, as far as is practical, that questions are addressed in the discussion at the Board meeting. Notwithstanding discussions on the day, all questions will receive a written reply within 20 working days of the meeting.

Please note questions are listed below in the order in which they were received.

Question 1

From: Mark Tallon

Why have there still been no ministerial sign off of any CBD submission since the April 2024?

Can you please confirm that there will be completed approvals by the end of 2025 and if not why?

Answer

Draft risk management recommendations for three applications are currently out for consultation. This consultation follows completion of safety assessments on the associated applications in 2024. Once the consultation closes on 20 November, FSA officials will review all responses before finalising the proposals. The FSA will then make recommendations to Ministers in England and Wales, who will decide whether to authorise the applications.

These applications represent first of kind decisions for the FSA and ministers, and we have been working on draft risk management recommendations throughout 2025.

Publication of this consultation represents a major milestone in CBD policy development and is the culmination of extensive, targeted engagement over the summer months. We acknowledge this has taken longer than anticipated due to the complexities of these substances, including (but not limited to) the interactions with drug law.

The focus of this engagement was the FSA's provisional acceptable daily intake (ADI) of 10mg CBD per day and introducing the safe upper limit for delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (?9-THC). We also explained a shift in our policy to permit reformulation and relabelling of products on the public

list where necessary to meet these safety requirements. We knew from previous feedback from stakeholders that industry wanted to see the FSA take this step; the policy now reflects a more flexible, risk-based approach that supports compliance while maintaining high safety standards. We continue to engage with stakeholders to support the implementation of these changes.?

The consultation sets out, in detail, the wide range of cross cutting factors that our risk managers have had to consider and outlines our policy proposals. Taking the extra time to get this right means that we are now in a stronger position from which to deliver more consultations on CBD applications. The questions we have asked in the consultation are relevant not just to the applications being considered but to CBD policy more generally. Therefore, the feedback we gather will help to reduce the complexity of our risk management considerations on future applications. We are now actively reviewing applications that have completed the risk assessment stage since August 2024 for future consultation.

The consultation is the next step in our engagement on CBD, and an opportunity for stakeholders to shape the final terms of any authorisation. Once the consultation closes on 20 November, FSA officials will review all responses before finalising the proposals. The FSA will then make recommendations to Ministers in England and Wales, who will decide whether to authorise the applications.

Question 2

From: Richard Webster, Director of Safety, Marston's

Chart 10 Percentage of FHRS rating 5 for each Country from March 2020 to date. The key shows 4 line colours. The colours for England & NI are very similar which is a bit confusing. The chart appears to only show 3 lines. This looks like NI, Total FHRS and Wales. Is England's line missing or is it obscured by the total FHRS red line? If this is the case, the chart shows what we are concerned about i.e, that LAs in Wales (and in South Wales in particular) consistently score food businesses lower than LAs North Wales and England

Answer

We apologise that Chart 10 was unclear. The 'total FHRS' line obscures the 'England' line due to the scale of the chart. This is a consequence of the high number of food establishments in England making these data very similar to the total. We will consider how this is reflected in the presentation of data in future.

Since the introduction of mandatory display of food hygiene ratings in Wales, the proportion of businesses with the highest food hygiene rating has continued to rise year on year and currently stands at 73.8%. The number of compliant food businesses in Wales achieving a rating of '3' or better account for 97.1% of all rated food businesses.

The FSA has a role in monitoring consistency of the application of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The consistent application of the FHRS by authorised officers within and across local authorities (LA) in Wales is vital to ensure fairness and provide a level playing field for food businesses.

Since 2020, the FSA has offered local authority authorised officers with the opportunity to refresh their skills and has facilitated four national consistency exercises (NCEs) across Wales, England and Northern Ireland. In addition to this, the FSA in Wales has also funded 11 FHRS consistency workshops to over 300 officers across all 22 LAs in Wales. A further two are planned for November and December 2025.

The results from the NCEs and Wales workshops are reviewed, and reports are produced by the FSA. Any issues or areas of concern are highlighted and raised with LAs.

From the food hygiene rating data we hold, there is no evidence to suggest that ratings are being applied inconsistently across different regions within Wales or that LA authorised officers are not correctly utilising Annex 1 of the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) to score establishments and issue food hygiene ratings to businesses in their area.

If a business does not feel that their rating properly reflects the food hygiene standards or that the rating criteria were not applied correctly when the food hygiene rating was issued, the FHRS also incorporates safeguards to ensure fairness to businesses. This includes an appeal procedure and a 'right to reply' for publication. These are published alongside the rating and a mechanism for requesting a re-rating inspection if and when improvements have been made.

Question 3

From: Simon Dawson, Policy Advisor, AIMS

Para 3.6 of the Annual Report refers to an internal audit reviewing the approval process for abattoirs when non-compliance has been escalated to the point that their approval to operate may be suspended / withdrawn. The report gave a moderate assurance opinion.

Can the Board publish the findings and/or recommendations from that audit that justified this Moderate rating?

Answer

We noted the following positive attributes during the course of this audit:

1. For each case we reviewed data from the Chronos system, enforcement tracker, audits, intervention protocols and animal welfare reports to Defra and the Welsh Government. We can confirm that the information detailed in the different reports is consistent.
2. Our sample testing identified that the intervention protocol process is being followed.
3. Reporting and communicating in respect of enforcement and intervention is strong within the Operations Directorate with several formal and informal avenues being used.

Scope for improvement was found in relation to the following:

1. The intervention protocol could be timelier, for instance around the time given to implement guarantees, as the evidence demonstrates that these cases take between 3 and 4 times longer to resolve. However, any work in the area would have to consider the legal implications and balance the risks.
2. "Zero tolerance of animal welfare breaches" is still used in areas of the FSA internet and has been quoted in the media. This phrase has the potential to create unrealistic expectations from the public versus how breaches are correctly dealt with using the enforcement hierarchy.

Work has been taken forward in those areas where scope for improvement was found. For instance, we have replaced the 'zero tolerance' phrase with the words "When we identify breaches, they are fully investigated, and we take appropriate and proportionate action to protect animal welfare", which is a more accurate reflection of the process and better manages expectations. This is detailed on our website here: [Animal welfare | Food Standards Agency](#).

In respect of the business that triggered the internal audit review, it no longer has approval to operate as a slaughterhouse.

Question 4

From: Simon Dawson, Policy Advisor, AIMS

Several food business operators in the meat industry have reported that FSA and their contractors have stated that they are experiencing difficulties in providing the necessary level of staffing resource, both Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Official Veterinarians, to meet their operating requirements. Have FSA executive reported problems supplying staff in some areas of the country to the Board or its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and is there a risk on the FSA Risk Register concerning the availability of effective staffing resources? If so, can this risk and any associated mitigation and contingency plans be published?

Answer

FSA Field Operations continually monitor the resources required to deliver Official Controls in abattoirs, and we are confident in the medium- and long-term availability of both Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors to deliver against the current requirements of food businesses.

The FSA makes public a summary of its principal risks and mitigations in its Annual Report and Accounts. The risk that we are unable to deliver official controls in the meat sector featured on the FSA corporate risk register in 23-24 and can be seen here ([Annual reports and accounts, including Our Food | Food Standards Agency](#)). As can be seen in that report, our assessment at that time was that the risk was improving. The FSA continually monitors the risks that we face and updates our mitigation plans, therefore the corporate risk register changes over time. This year, the risk that we are unable to delivery official controls in the meat sector has not been included amongst our principal risks in our corporate risk register (see [section 14 of the Chief Executive's report to the March Board](#)). Our corporate risks will continue to be kept under review.

Question 5

From: Aneke Schwager, Director Government Relations, Impossible Foods Inc

Will the FSA proceed with the 'reference laboratory' reform proposal as outlined in the June Board's Market Authorisation Modernisation paper, considering that it is of technical and non-controversial nature, is not in conflict with ongoing SPS negotiations and would free up significant resources for both, regulators and applicants?

Answer

Officials presented a [paper on further proposals](#) to streamline the market authorisation service at the FSA Board meeting on 18 June. This included a proposal to clarify the definition of 'reference laboratory' used in legislation to ensure that beyond doubt, where appropriate, the FSA could use European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL) reports to inform authorisation decisions where applications have already received a EURL report.

Retained law requires a 'reference laboratory' to evaluate analytical/detection methods. Since EU Exit, the UK has contracted a National Reference Laboratory (NRL) that can verify analytical/detection methods used as part of the approvals process for GMO and feed additive applications.

As the proposals were being drawn up, the UK Government announced its commitment to negotiating a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement to help boost trade and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers in the UK and the EU. This will involve alignment with EU law across areas in scope (as outlined in [the UK-EU Summit Common Understanding text](#)).

FSA Board members were supportive of the proposals for reform of the market authorisation service but noted that the details of the UK-EU SPS Agreement are subject to further negotiations with the EU. However, we agreed that we should await more clarity on the form that an UK-EU SPS agreement may take and the likely timeframe before progressing with any of the proposals, since this work would take significant FSA resource, which is currently being used on work to plan for the SPS Agreement negotiations. In addition, Parliamentary time available for government legislation is extremely limited and is managed by the Parliamentary Bill Committee, which devises a legislative programme to reflect the Government's priorities and aims to ensure that time is used as efficiently as possible.